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# INTERNAL LINKING

## How to “make way” to search engine and users

**Mariachiara Marsella**

Temporary Digital Manager & SEO strategist  
co-founder BEM Research



Organized by



The Executive Network

1. The value of internal linking according to Google
2. When and why do you click on a contextual link?
3. Mistakes to avoid and good practices
4. Tools that make life easier: Visual SEO Studio



1. The value of internal linking according to Google
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We are talking about:

- On-page optimization
- Elements **Controllable** by webmaster/SEO
- It's **not just about navigation menus**
- It is nothing new, but **now** everyone is talking about





✓ It is nothing new, but **now** everyone is talking about

Internal linking:

- Navigational
- **Contextual**



# 1. The value of internal linking according to Google

# Google Webmaster Central Blog

Official news on crawling and indexing sites for the Google index

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## Importance of link architecture

Monday, October 06, 2008

In Day 2 of [links week](#), we'd like to discuss the importance of link architecture and answer more advanced questions on the topic. [Link architecture—the method of internal linking on your site—is a crucial step in site design if you want your site indexed by search engines.](#) It plays a critical role in [Googlebot's ability](#) to find your site's pages and ensures that [your visitors](#) can navigate and enjoy your site.

# Sitelinks

At the moment, sitelinks are automated. We're always working to improve our sitelinks algorithms, and we may incorporate webmaster input in the future. There are **best practices** you can follow, however, to improve the quality of your sitelinks. **For example, for your site's internal links, make sure you use anchor text and alt text that's informative, compact, and avoids repetition.**

## Search Engine Watch

<https://searchenginewatch.com/> ▼

News articles, guides, reviews and commentary about Search, PPC, Social, Mobile, Analytics and more.

### Seo

Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) is the umbrella term for all the ...

### Ppc

Pay-per-click is the model that most platforms and channels ...

### SEW Connect

News articles, guides, reviews and commentary about Search, PPC ...

[More results from searchenginewatch.com »](#)

### Beyond Google Analytics: 10 ...

SEO and social media would at first appear to be ... platform and ...

### Reports

Improve search engine performance with ratings and ...

### Online Marketing Guides

Online Marketing Guides. Looking for search engines? This ...

<https://www.searchenginewatch.com/2017/11/30/what-are-sitelinks-and-how-can-i-get-them/>

# Using 'breadcrumb lists'

A breadcrumb is a row of internal links at the top or bottom of the page that allows visitors to quickly navigate back to a previous section or the root page. Many breadcrumbs have the most general page (usually the root page) as the first, leftmost link and list the more specific sections out to the right. We recommend using breadcrumb structured data markup<sup>28</sup> when showing breadcrumbs.



Home Guides Reference What's new Case studies Tools Help

Overview

Structured data

Article

Book

Breadcrumb

Carousel

Course

COVID-19 announcements

Critic review

Dataset

Employer Aggregate Rating

Estimated salary

Event

Fact Check

FAQ

Home Activities

How-to

Image License

Job Posting

Job Training

Local Business

Logo

Movie

Home > Products > Search for Developers > Reference

## Breadcrumb

A breadcrumb trail on a page indicates the page's position in the site hierarchy, and it may help users understand and explore a site effectively. A user can navigate all the way up in the site hierarchy, one level at a time, by starting from the last breadcrumb in the breadcrumb trail.

As of April 6, 2020, data-vocabulary.org markup will no longer be eligible for the breadcrumb feature in Google Search. To be eligible after April 6, 2020, you need to replace data-vocabulary.org markup with schema.org markup. Learn more about [sunsetting support for data-vocabulary](#).

### How to add structured data

Structured data is a standardized format for providing information about a page and classifying the page content. If

☆☆☆☆

[Send feedback](#)

News | Life With Cats  
Life With Cats > TV > News

December 10, 2017 Posted by Adrea Leave a Comment · Is This What Your Cat Does When You Aren't Home? Do you know what your cat does when you aren't home? Perhaps this kitty will give you a bit of insight.

Table of contents

[How to add structured data](#)

Examples

Single breadcrumb trail

Multiple breadcrumb trail

Guidelines

Structured data type definitions

BreadcrumbList

Listitem

Monitor rich results with Search Console

After deploying structured data for the first time

After releasing new templates or updating your code

[Analyzing traffic periodically](#)

Troubleshooting

Google Search Console

Miglioramenti

[Segnali web essenziali](#)

[Usabilità sui dispositivi mobili](#)

[Breadcrumb](#)

[Casella di ricerca sitelink](#)

Sicurezza e azioni manuali

Strumenti e rapporti precedenti

[Link](#)

[Impostazioni](#)

[Invia feedback](#)

[Commenti sulla nuova versi...](#)

@uale75



Make it as easy as possible for users to go from general content to the more specific content they want on your site. Add navigation pages when it makes sense and effectively work these into your internal link structure. Make sure all of the pages on your site are reachable through links, and that they don't require an internal "search" functionality to be found. Link to related pages, where appropriate, to allow users to discover similar content.

### 2.4.2 Identifying the Supplementary Content (SC)

Supplementary Content contributes to a good user experience on the page, but does not directly help the page achieve its purpose. SC is controlled by webmasters and is an important part of the user experience. One common type of SC is navigation links that allow users to visit other parts of the website. Note that in some cases, content behind tabs may be considered part of the SC of the page.

## Provide one version of a URL to reach a document

To prevent users from linking to one version of a URL and others linking to a different version (this could split the reputation of that content between the URLs), [focus on using and referring to one URL in the structure and internal linking of your pages](#). If you do find that people are accessing the same content through multiple URLs, setting up a [301 redirect](#)<sup>32</sup> from non-preferred URLs to the dominant URL is a good solution for this. You may also use canonical URL or use the [rel="canonical"](#)<sup>33</sup> link element if you cannot redirect.

## Think about anchor text for internal links too

You may usually think about linking in terms of pointing to outside websites, but paying [more attention to the anchor text](#) used for internal links can help users and [Google navigate your site better](#).

### Avoid:

- Using [excessively keyword-filled](#) or lengthy anchor text just for search engines.
- Creating unnecessary links that don't help with the user's navigation of the site.



In risposta a @iqseo

That sounds like normal A/B testing, so I wouldn't be too worried. Layout + internal linking **can affect ranking too, fwiw.**

Traduci il Tweet

5:22 PM · 31 gen 2017 · Twitter Web Client



In risposta a @Web\_Vibes

I'd just use the rel=canonical & make sure internal **linking goes to the canonical too.**

Traduci il Tweet

8:03 AM · 23 giu 2017 · TweetDeck



In risposta a @AlanBleiweiss

Yeah, **sitemaps don't replace internal linking.** Make a great website first, then use sitemaps to tell us about new & updated pages.

Traduci il Tweet

8:05 PM · 15 mar 2018 · TweetDeck



In risposta a @EthanLazuk

Lighthouse is meant as a way of spotting potential issues -- it's not a comprehensive to-do list. That said, **internal links with useful anchor text help users, and they help search engines :)**

Traduci il Tweet

11:11 PM · 10 mar 2020 · TweetDeck



SEO Police @SEOPolice1 · 25 ott 2019

@JohnMu Hello John Mueller, should I use "nofollow" tag for internal Pagerank Sculpting? As I know, it doesn't work. Do you have any kind of suggestion? #seo #google

1 1 1



In risposta a @SEOPolice1

**If it doesn't work, don't use it :).** In general, I think it's a waste of time to do that. In practice, people waste their time on it anyway.

Traduci il Tweet

10:30 AM · 25 ott 2019 · Twitter Web Client



In risposta a @OLMcontent, @gorcampbell e @dannysullivan

We use multiple factors when picking a canonical URL, including redirects, rel-canonical, sitemaps, **internal** links, external links, https, etc -- the more you align everything, the more likely we'll pick your preference.

Traduci il Tweet

6:14 PM · 8 lug 2019 · TweetDeck



2. When and why do you click on a contextual link?



## Insights powered by real people



Validating a project before launch? Or simply testing the waters? With the right feedback, you'll have the reliable market research you need to make even smarter business decisions at every step.

- Google Surveys
- 1,500 Italian users
- 1 question

## Insights powered by real people

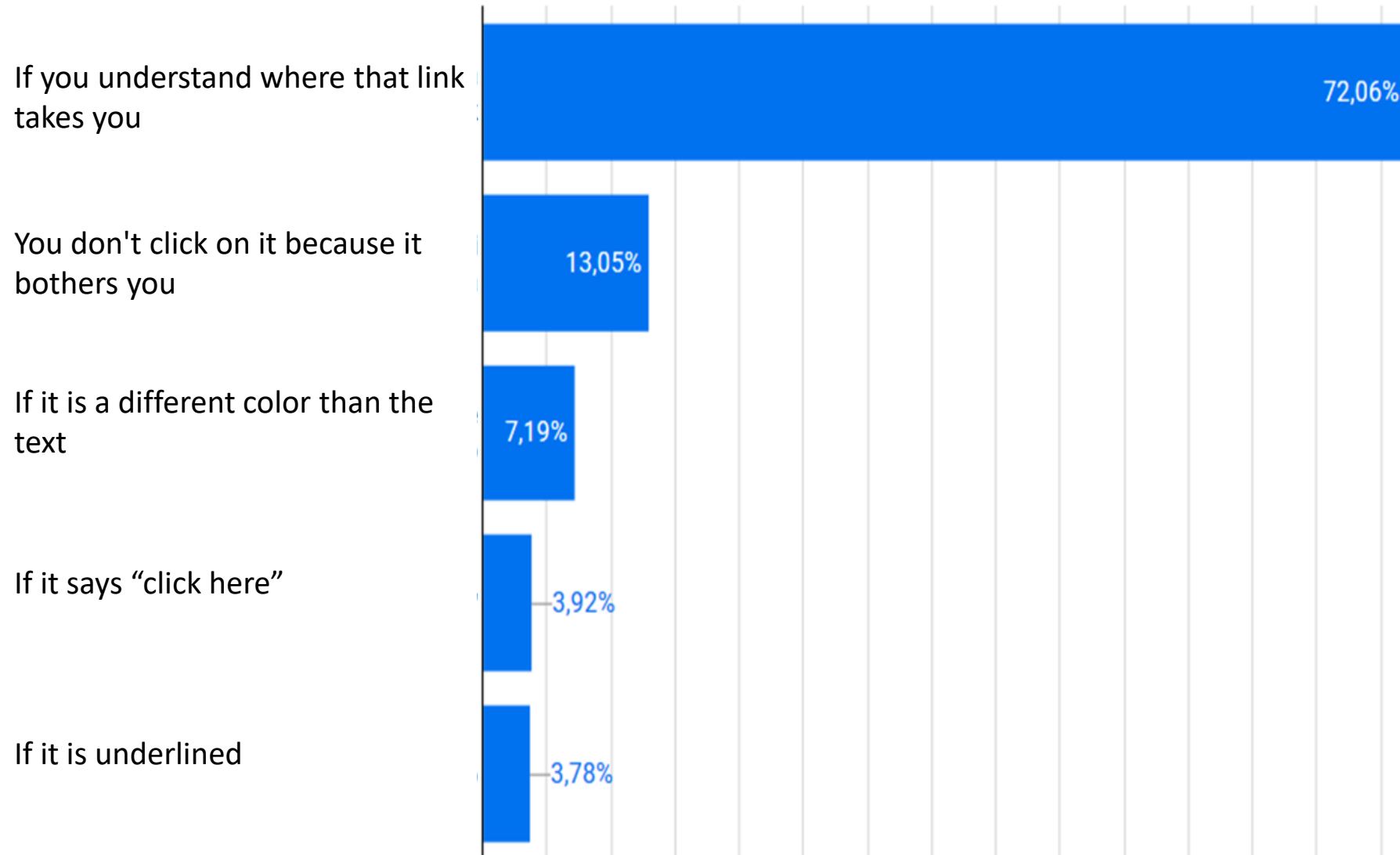


Validating a project before launch? Or simply testing the waters? With the right feedback, you'll have the reliable market research you need to make even smarter business decisions at every step.

## When you find a link in the text, you click on it:

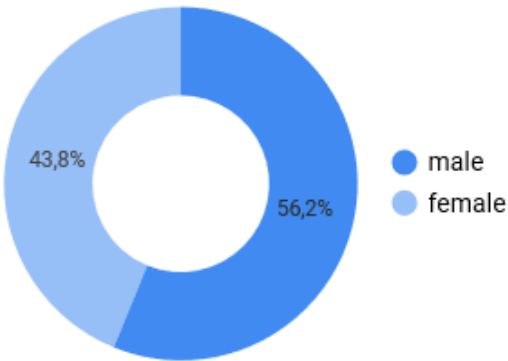
1. If you understand where that link takes you
2. You don't click on it because it bothers you
3. If it is a different color than the text
4. If it says "click here"
5. If it is underlined

## When you find a link in the text, you click on it:

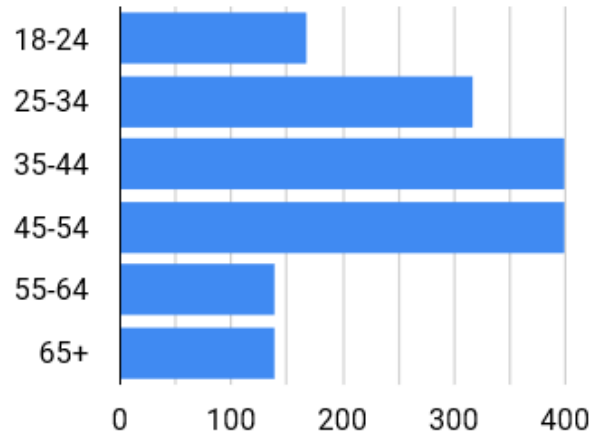


Respondents  
(click to filter)

Gender



Age



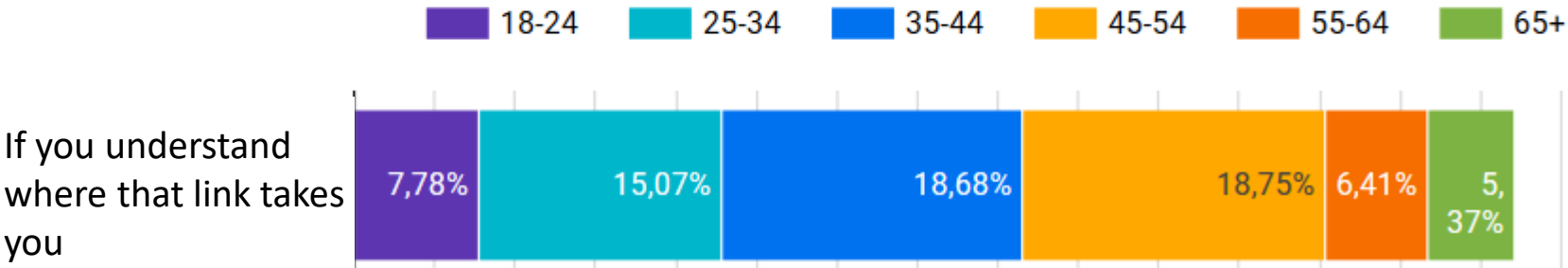
Question 1 Results - Breakdown by Gender

If you understand where that link takes you



Question 1 Results - Breakdown by Age

When you find a link in the text, you click on it:

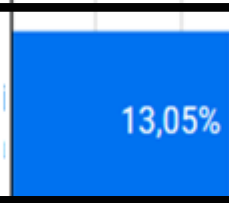


# When you find a link in the text, you click on it:

If you understand where that link takes you



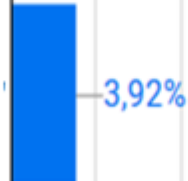
You don't click on it because it bothers you



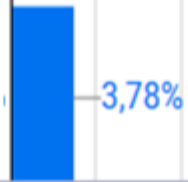
If it is a different color than the text



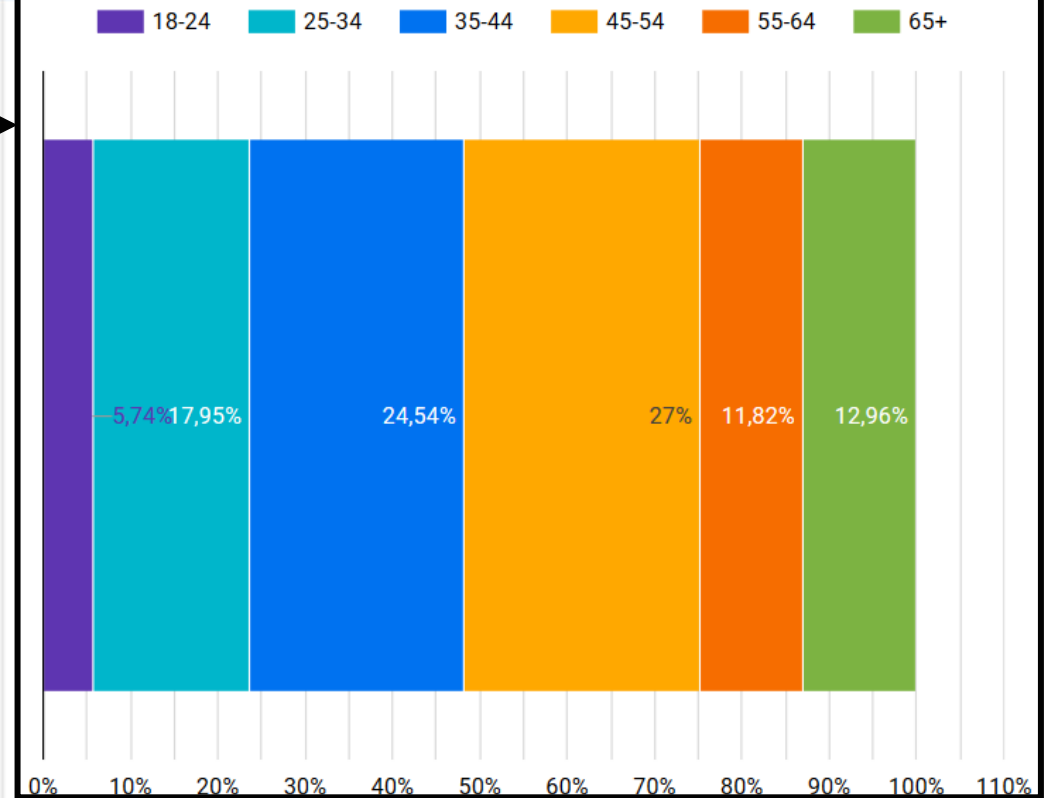
If it says "click here"



If it is underlined



Question 1 Results - Breakdown by Age







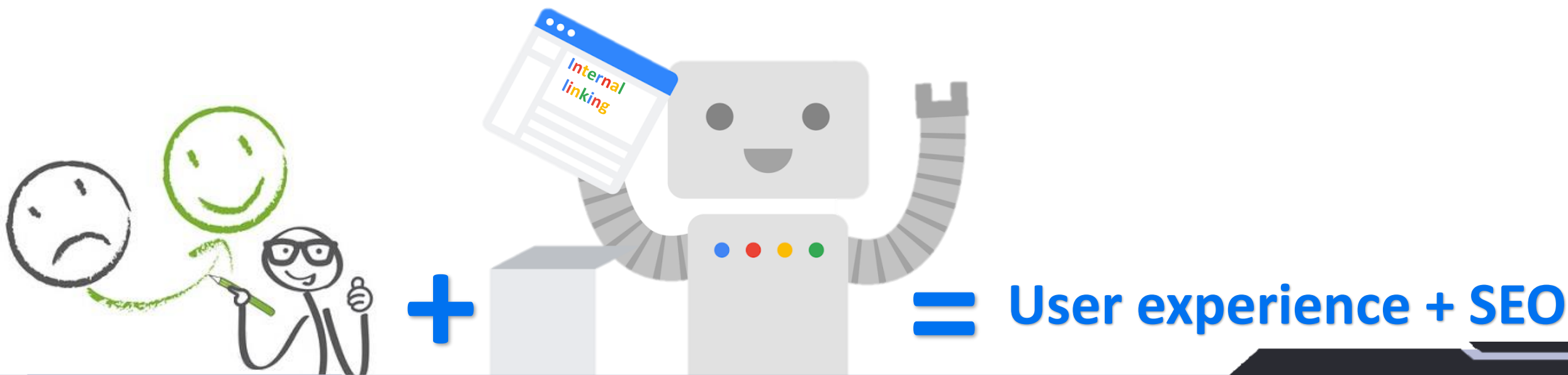
If I understand where  
that link takes me

72,06%

**ANCHOR TEXT**

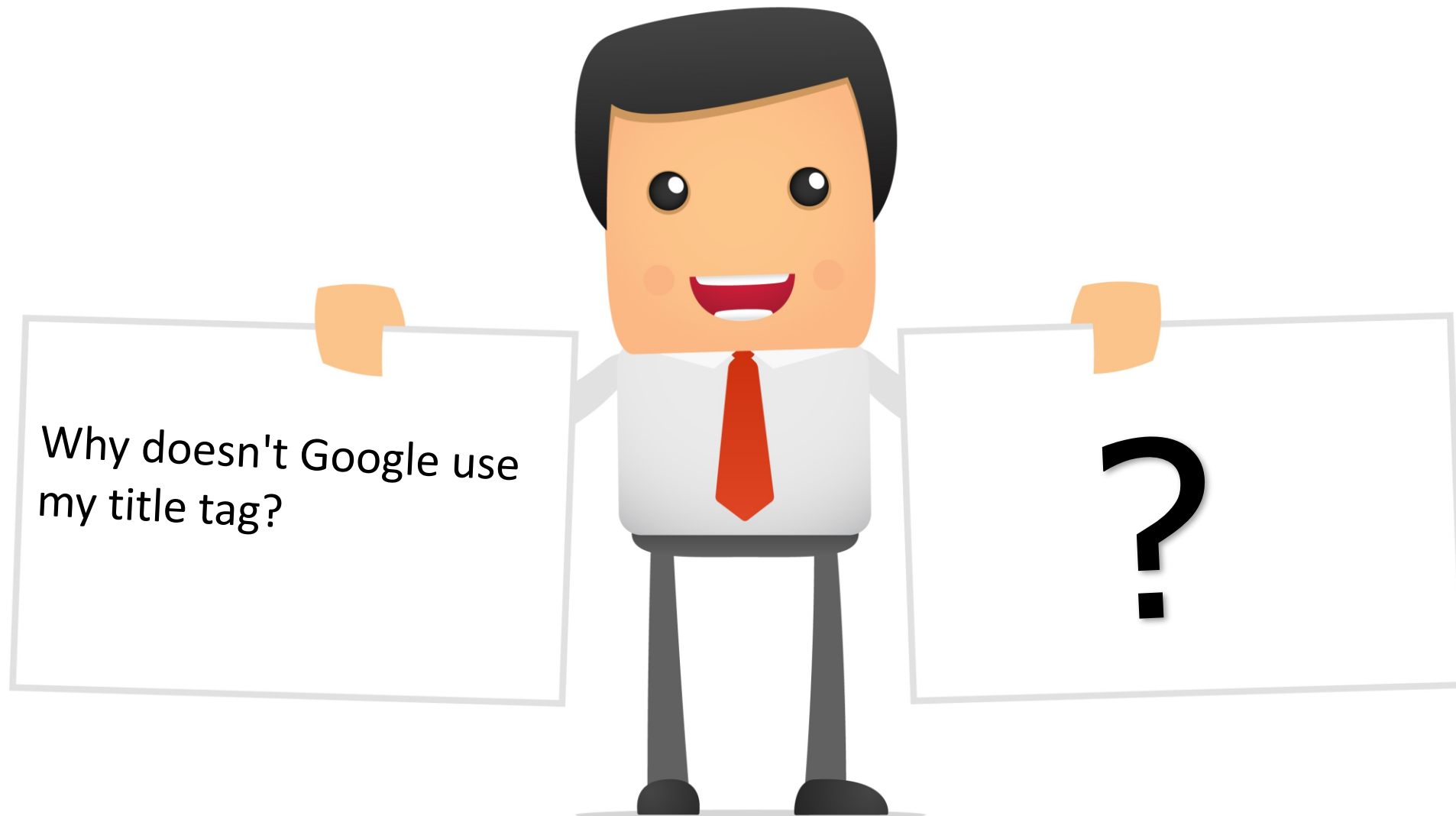
Think about anchor text for internal links too

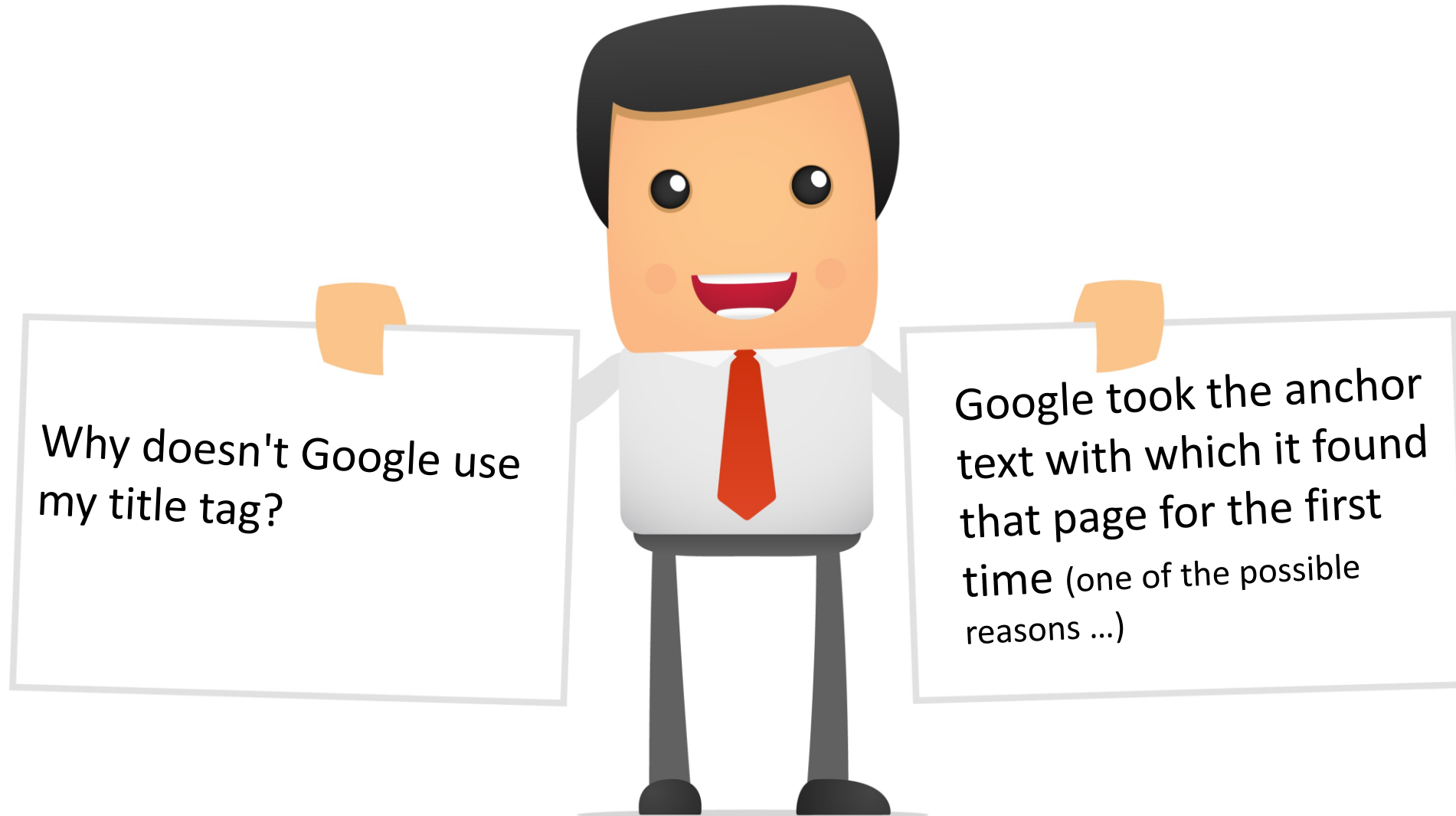
You may usually think about linking in terms of pointing to outside websites, but paying more attention to the anchor text used for internal links can help users and Google navigate your site better.



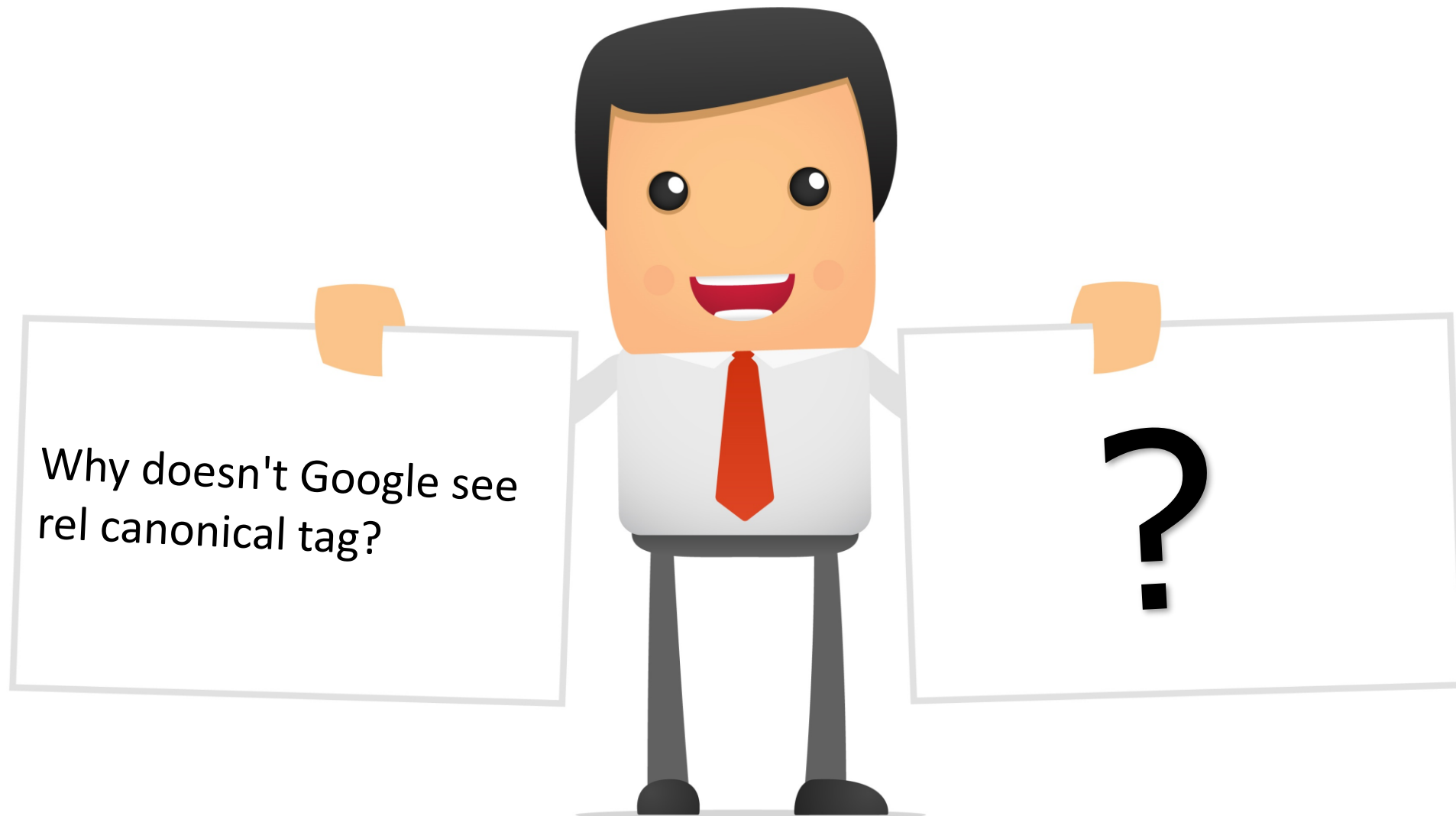
# Users signal + SEO

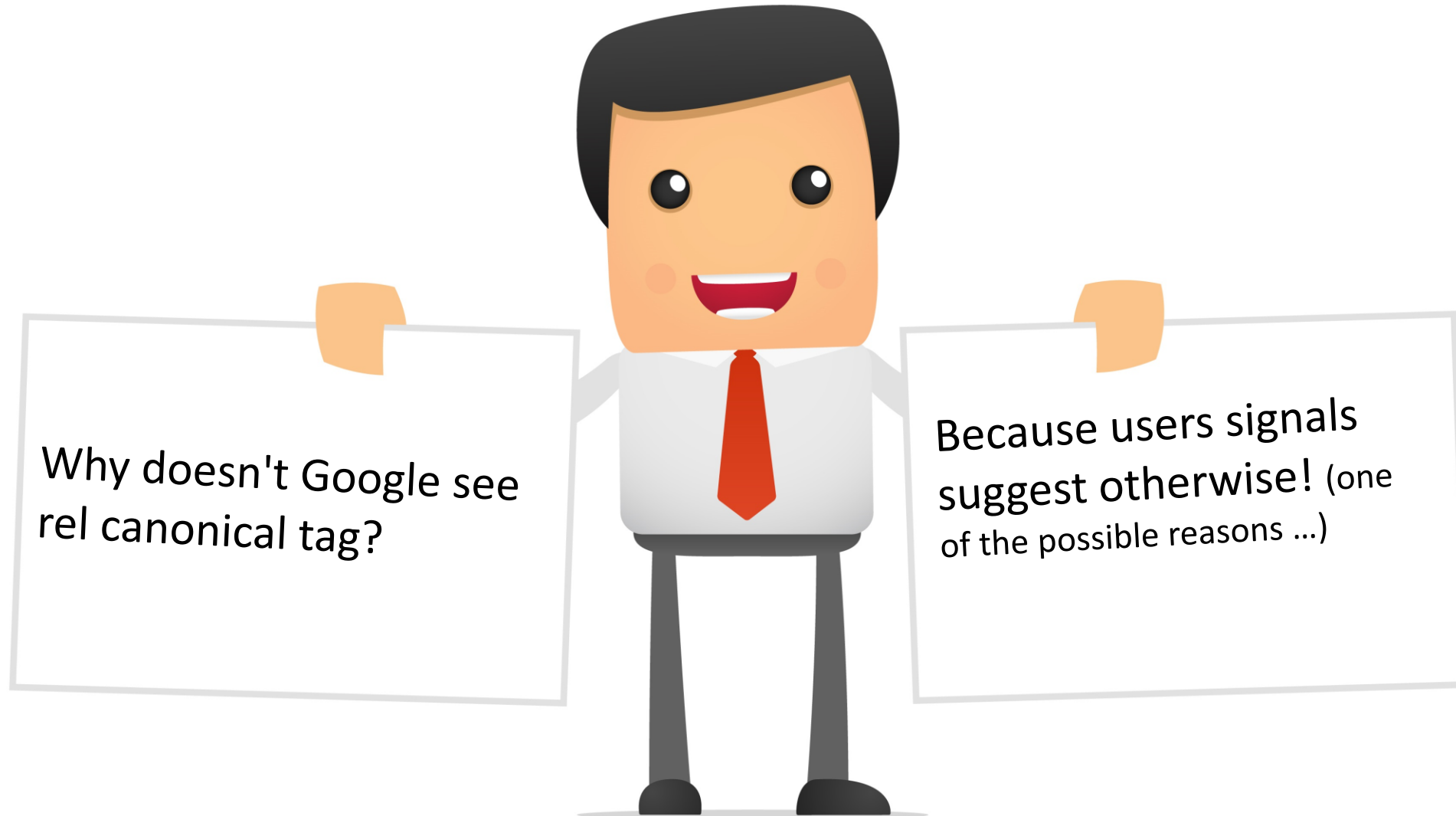










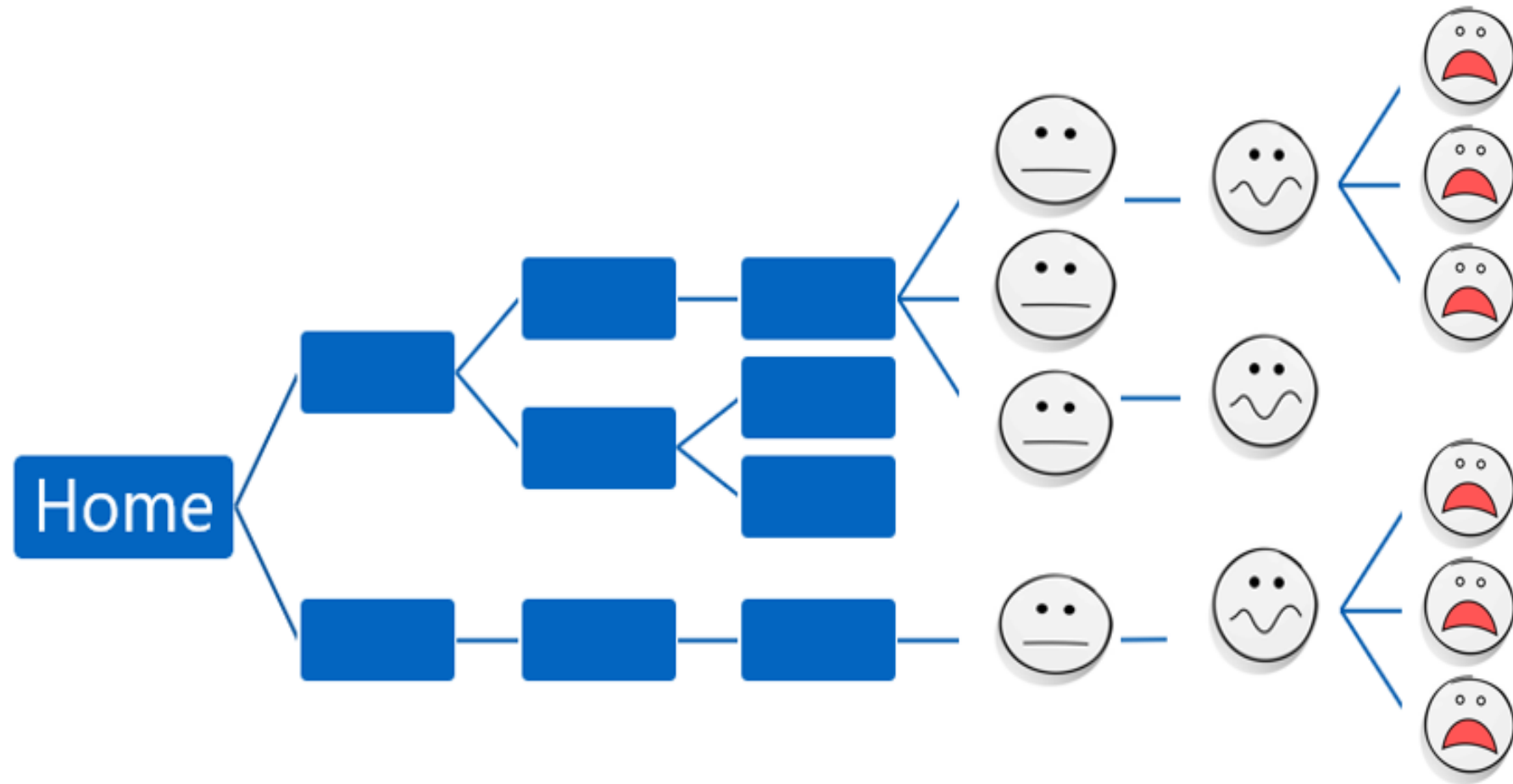


Why doesn't Google see  
rel canonical tag?

Because users signals  
suggest otherwise! (one  
of the possible reasons ...)

### 3. Mistakes to avoid and good practices

# Page depth and the rule of 3





## English Google Webmaster Central office-hours hangout

5.845 visualizzazioni • Trasmesso in live streaming il giorno 1 giu 2018



# Page depth and the rule of 3

## 2 events in SEO's life

**New project:** SEO should collaborate with UX expert in order to create an information architecture that works for both users and search engines

Website migration,  
restyling, rebranding  
...



In risposta a [@iqseo](#)

That sounds like normal A/B testing, so I wouldn't be too worried. **Layout + internal linking can affect ranking too, fwiw.**

[Traduci il Tweet](#)

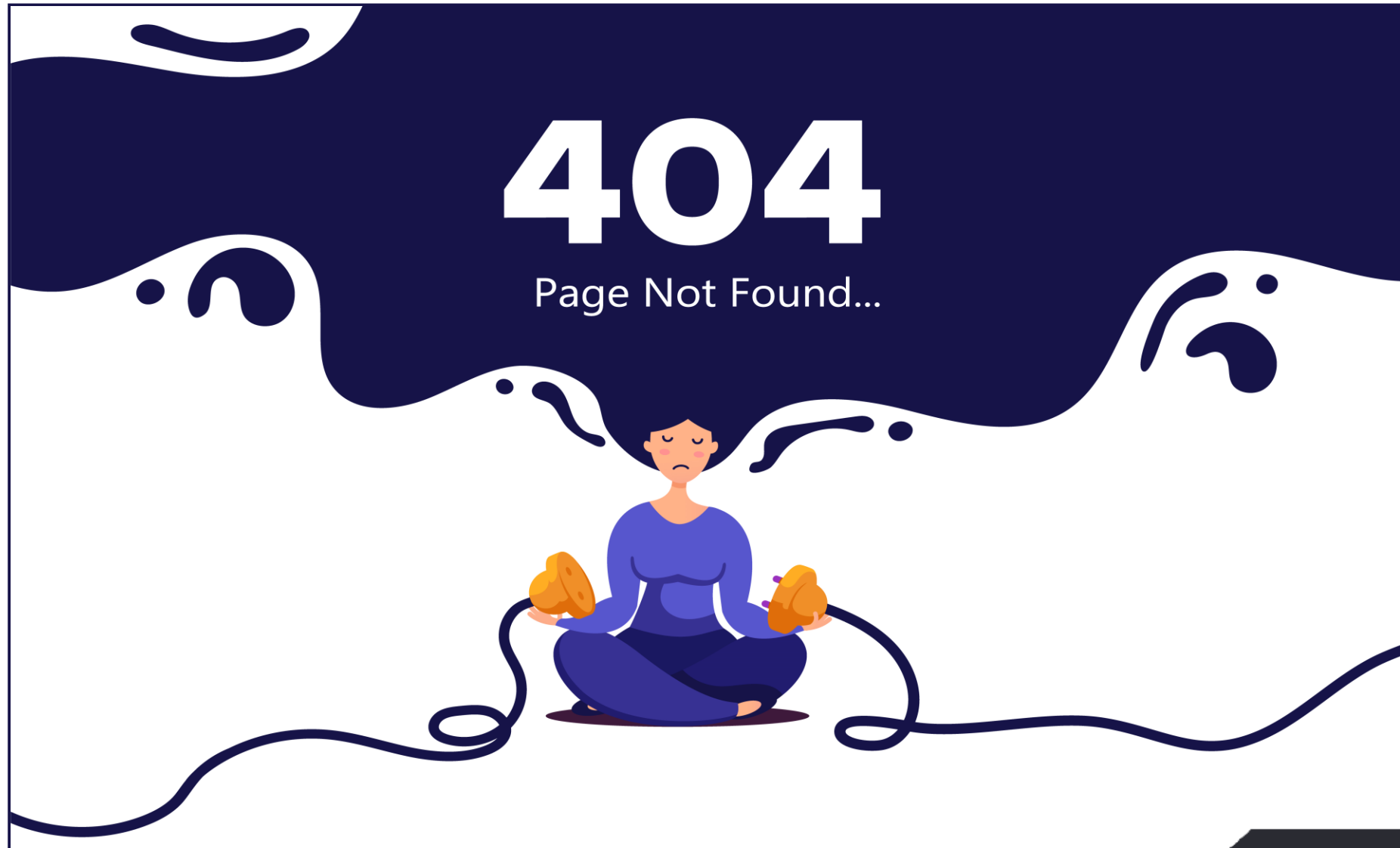
5:22 PM · 31 gen 2017 · Twitter Web Client

# Page depth and the rule of 3

- Search Console
- Google Analytics/web analytics
- Do not just look at pages that rank well!

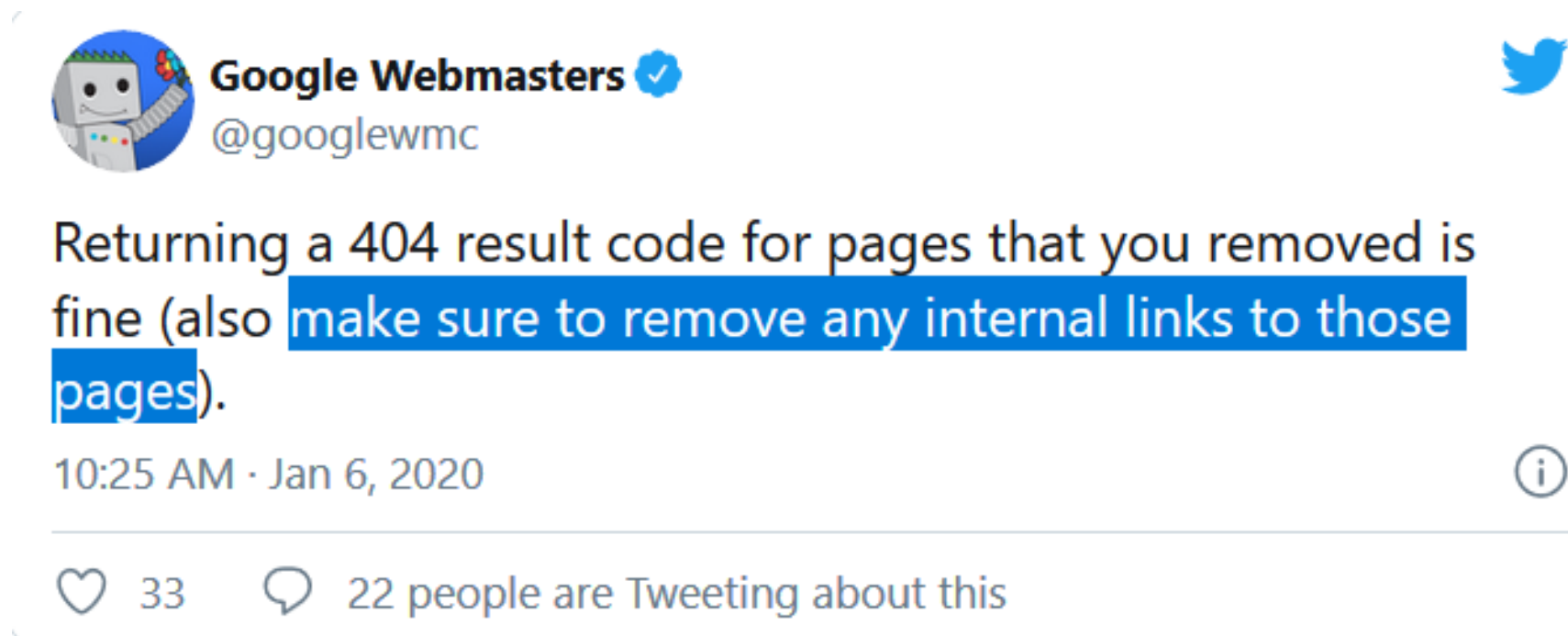


# Contextual links 404



# Contextual links 404

- 1) 404 page (the «real» one!) is not a problem by default
- 2) Contextual links to 404, or worse to 404 soft, could be a problem



# Contextual links 404



Google Webmasters 

@googlewmc



Returning a 404 result code for pages that you removed is fine (also **make sure to remove any internal links to those pages**).

10:25 AM · Jan 6, 2020



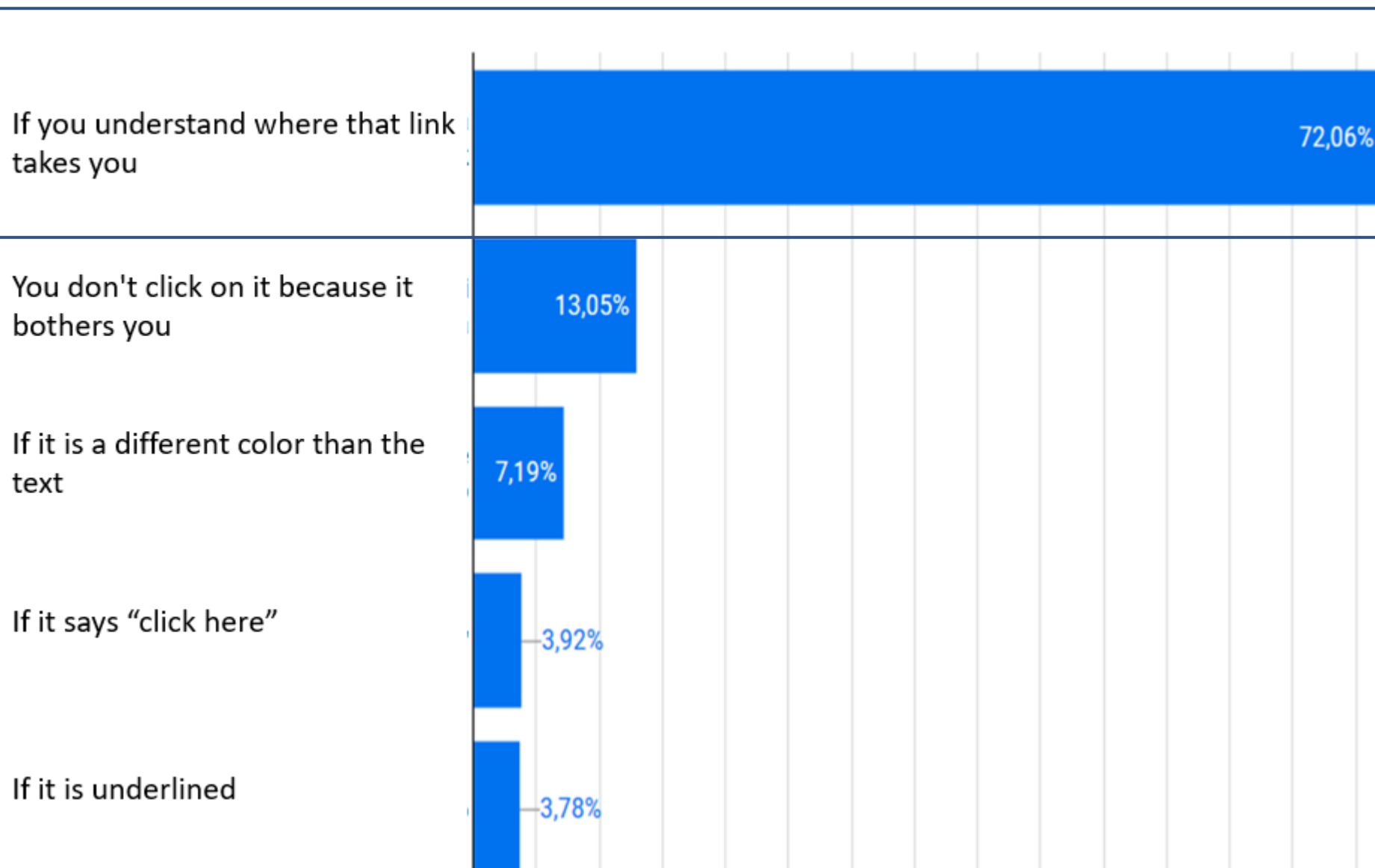
33



22 people are Tweeting about this

If you think about it, it is not just a SEO issue ...

## When you find a link in the text, you click on it:



With a 404  
contextual /  
navigational link  
you are lying to  
users

# Plug-ins that add internal links automatically (and you do not manage them ...)

L'obesità, uno dei principali problemi di salute pubblica, è causata nella maggior parte dei casi da stili di vita scorretti; è quindi una condizione ampiamente prevenibile



L'obesità è una condizione caratterizzata da un eccessivo accumulo di **grasso** corporeo, condizione che determina gravi danni alla salute. E' causata nella maggior parte dei casi da **stili di vita** scorretti: da una parte, un'alimentazione scorretta **ipercalorica** e dall'altra un ridotto dispendio energetico a causa di inattività fisica. L'obesità è quindi una condizione ampiamente prevenibile.

L'obesità rappresenta uno dei principali problemi di **salute pubblica** a livello mondiale sia perché la sua prevalenza è in costante e preoccupante aumento non solo nei Paesi occidentali ma anche in quelli a basso-medio reddito sia perché è un importante **fattore di rischio** per varie malattie croniche, quali diabete mellito di tipo 2,

malattie cardiovascolari e tumori.

Si stima che il 44% dei casi di diabete tipo 2, il 23% dei casi di cardiopatia coronarica e il 41% di alcuni tumori sono attribuibili all'obesità/**sovrappeso**. In totale, **sovrappeso** e obesità sono un importante fattore di rischio per mortalità globale e i decessi attribuibili all'obesità sono in costante aumento.

L'**indice di massa corporea IMC** (body mass index) è un parametro ampiamente utilizzato, anche se dà un'informazione incompleta sulla distribuzione del grasso nell'organismo e non distingue tra massa muscolare e massa grassa. È un valore numerico che si ottiene dividendo il peso (espresso in Kg) per il quadrato dell'altezza (espressa in m).

Le definizioni dell'Organizzazione Mondiale della Sanità (OMS) sono:

- > **sovrappeso** = IMC da 25 a 29,99
- > **obesità** = IMC uguale o superiore a 30

Secondo dati dell'OMS, la prevalenza dell'obesità a livello globale è raddoppiata dal 1980 ad oggi; nel 2008 si contavano oltre 1,4 miliardi di adulti in sovrappeso (il 35% della popolazione mondiale); di questi oltre 200 milioni di uomini e oltre 300 milioni di donne erano obesi (l'11% della popolazione mondiale). Nel frattempo, il problema ha ormai iniziato ad interessare anche le fasce più giovani della popolazione: si stima che nel 2011 ci fossero nel mondo oltre 40 milioni di bambini al di sotto dei 5 anni in sovrappeso.

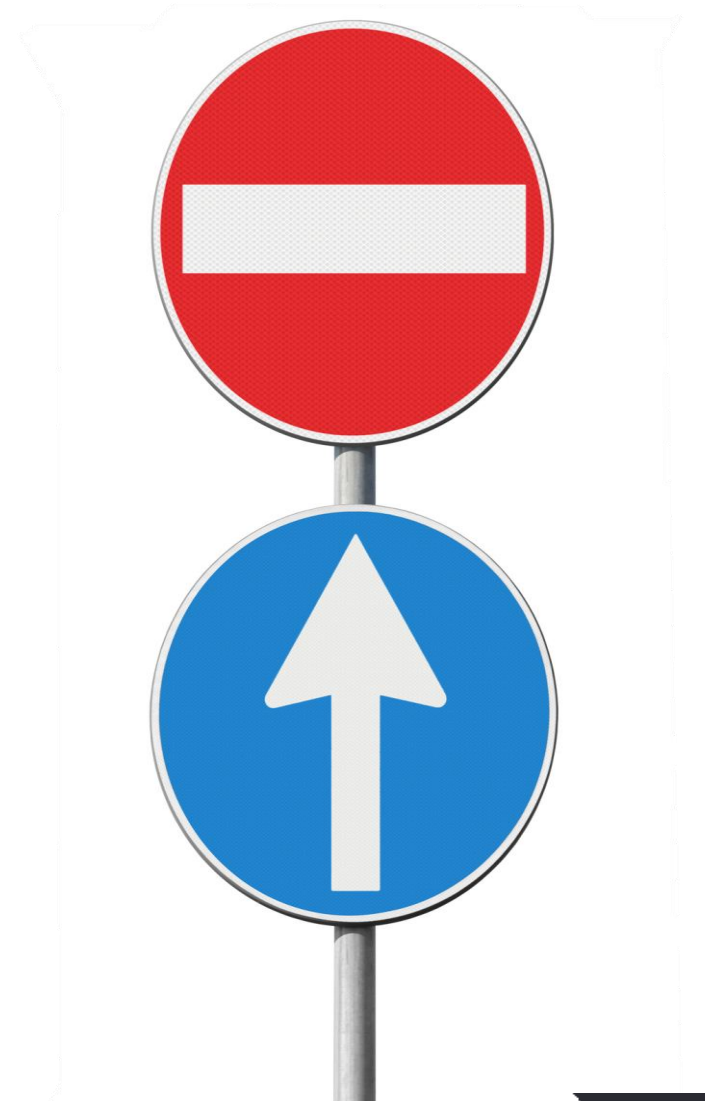
Issue with *exact match anchor text* in a lot of different pages

- are not really needed for users
- the same link repeated several times in the same page
- same anchor text with different links



# Internal links with contradictory signals

- Non-canonical pages
- Disallow / noindex pages
- Redirections
- Pages not https





# Internal links with contradictory signals



Once Google explained 404 soft page in this way:

If you go to the zoo and see a giraffe with a sign hanged around its neck that says “hello, I'm a dog”, what do you think about it?

# Internal links with contradictory signals

## Rigorous and in-depth training for editorial staff

- Anchor text
- Contextual link
- Canonical page
- Tag cloud



 @uale75

*You can indicate your preference to Google using these techniques, but Google may choose a different page as canonical than you do, for various reasons. So, what are the reasons? Thanks!*

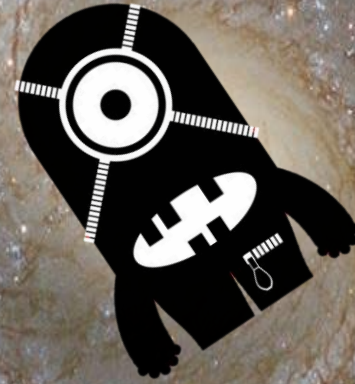
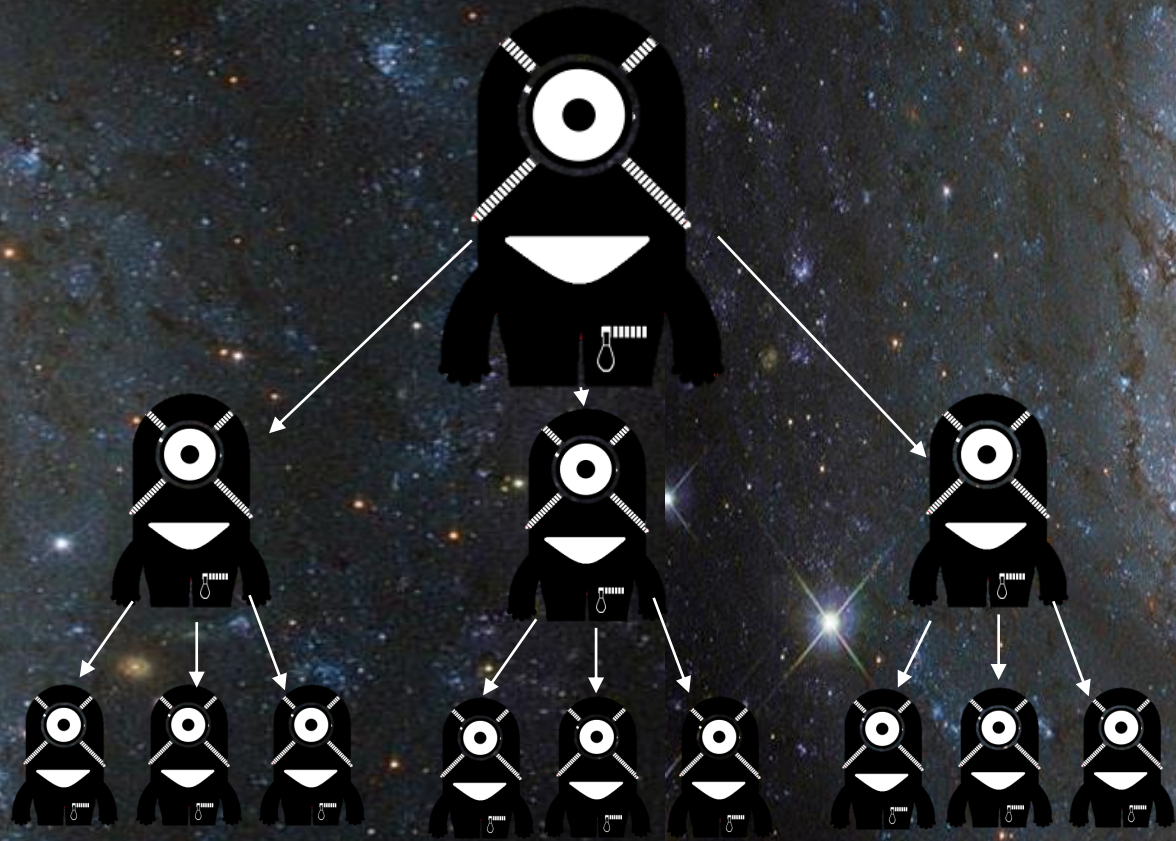
#AskGoogleWebmasters



@uale75



# Orphan pages





# Orphan pages

≡ Search Console Help

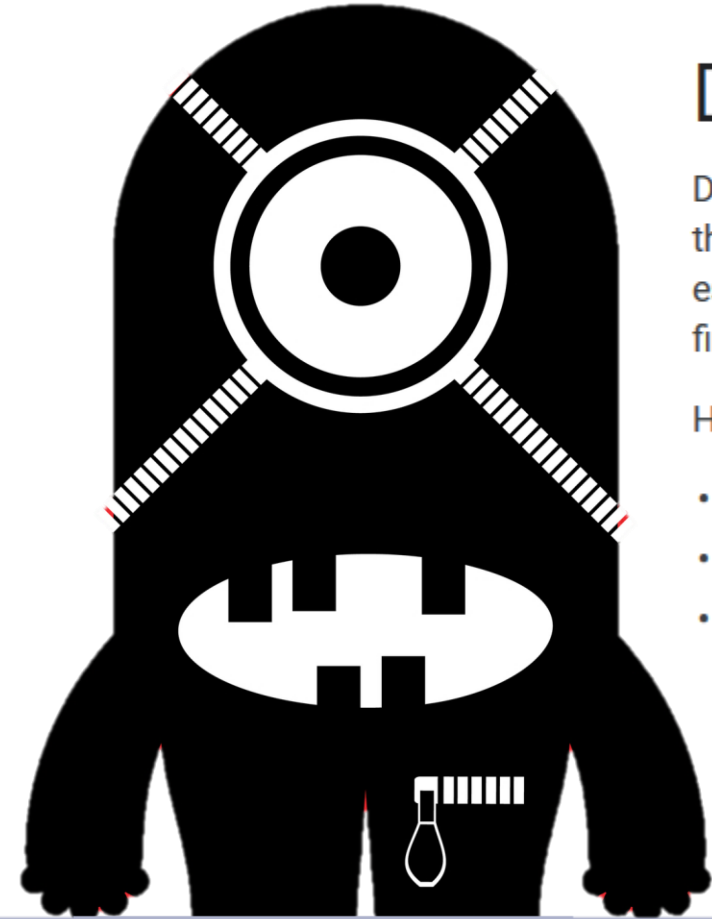
[Guidelines](#) > [Quality guidelines](#) > [Doorway pages](#)

## Doorway pages

Doorways are sites or pages created to rank highly for specific search queries. They are bad for users because they can lead to multiple similar pages in user search results, where each result ends up taking the user to essentially the same destination. They can also lead users to intermediate pages that are not as useful as the final destination.

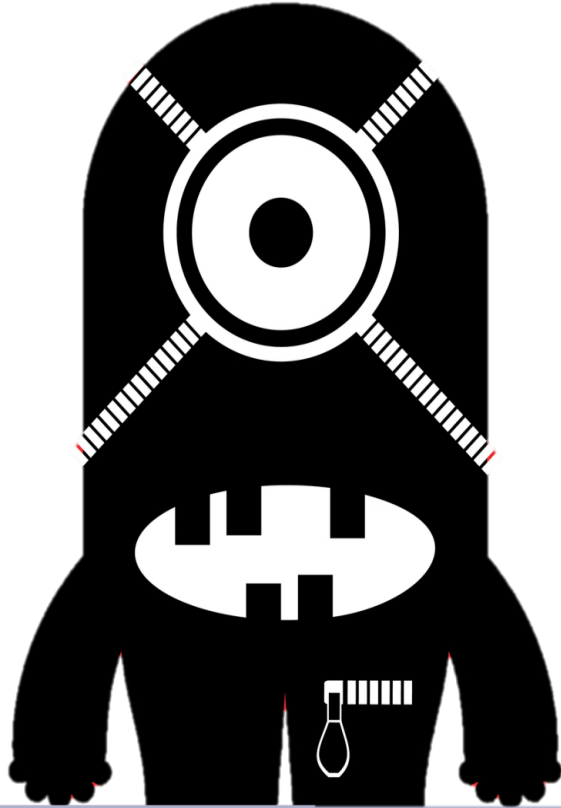
Here are some examples of doorways:

- Having multiple domain names or pages targeted at specific regions or cities that funnel users to one page
- Pages generated to funnel visitors into the actual usable or relevant portion of your site(s)
- Substantially similar pages that are closer to search results than a clearly defined, browseable hierarchy



# Orphan pages

- They generally have few visits
- It has to be clear what to do with them: keep them, "throw them" or combine them



### 3. Tools that make life easier: Visual SEO Studio



Search



## Tool SEO, come i chiusky di Doraemon



Mariachiara Marsella

Web Marketing Manager - Co founder BEM Research - Temporary manager

@uale75







### Pannello Comandi

#### File

- Nuovo Progetto...
- Apri Progetto...
- Amministra Sessioni
- Mostra pagina iniziale
- Visualizza Aiuto

#### Esplora

- Esplora un Sito...
- Esplora Sitemap...
- Esplora Lista URL...
- Esplora più Siti...

#### Viste

- Vista Esplorazione
- Vista a Cartelle
- Vista Tabellare

### Analisi Sito

- Suggerimenti HTML
- Suggerimenti URL
- Ispezione Immagini
- Ispezione Link**
- Suggerimenti Prestazioni
- Analisi hreflang
- Suggerimenti GA
- Analisi Leggibilità
- Estrazione Dati
- Filtri Personalizzati**

### Sitemap

- Crea nuova Sitemap

### Robots.txt

- Mostra robots.txt salvati

### Miniature

- Mostra Miniature sito...
- Mostra le Home Page
- Scatta Miniatura da URL...

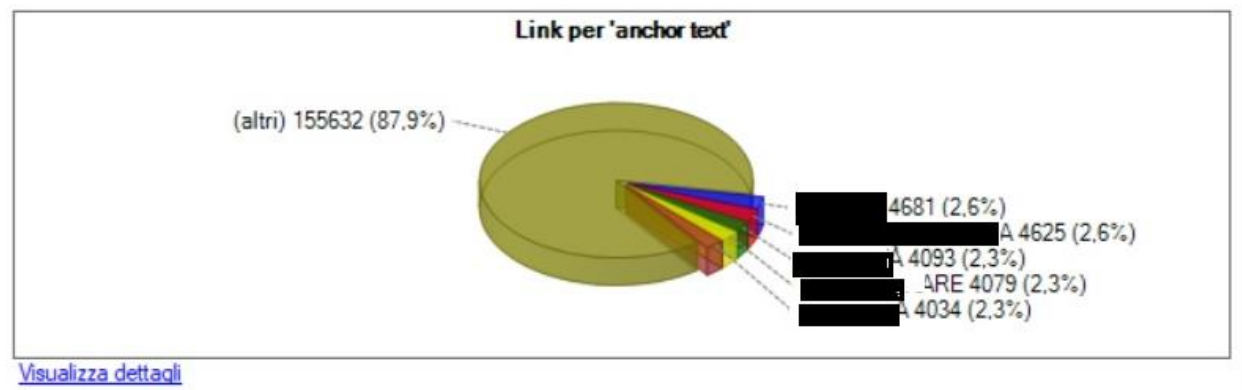
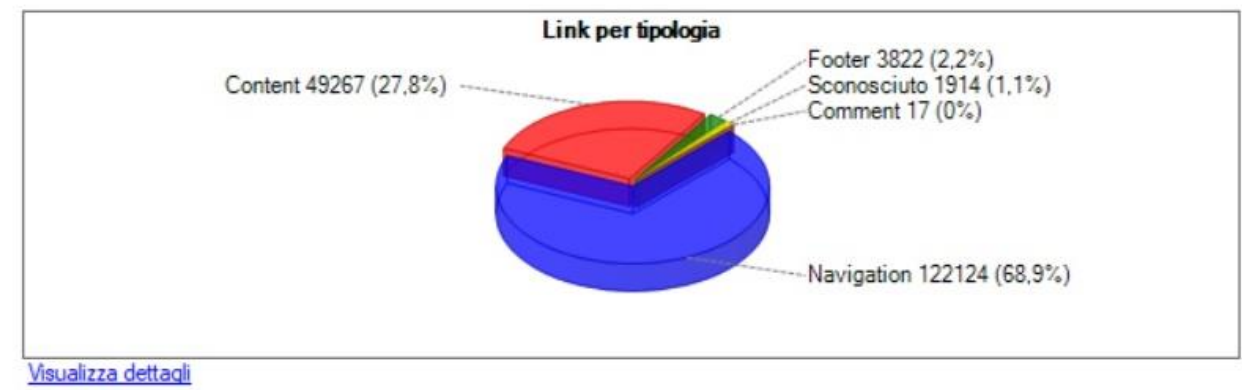
Tipo di corrispondenza: Dominio/URL da paragonare:

[Pagine con corrispondenze:](#) [Pagine senza corrispondenze:](#)

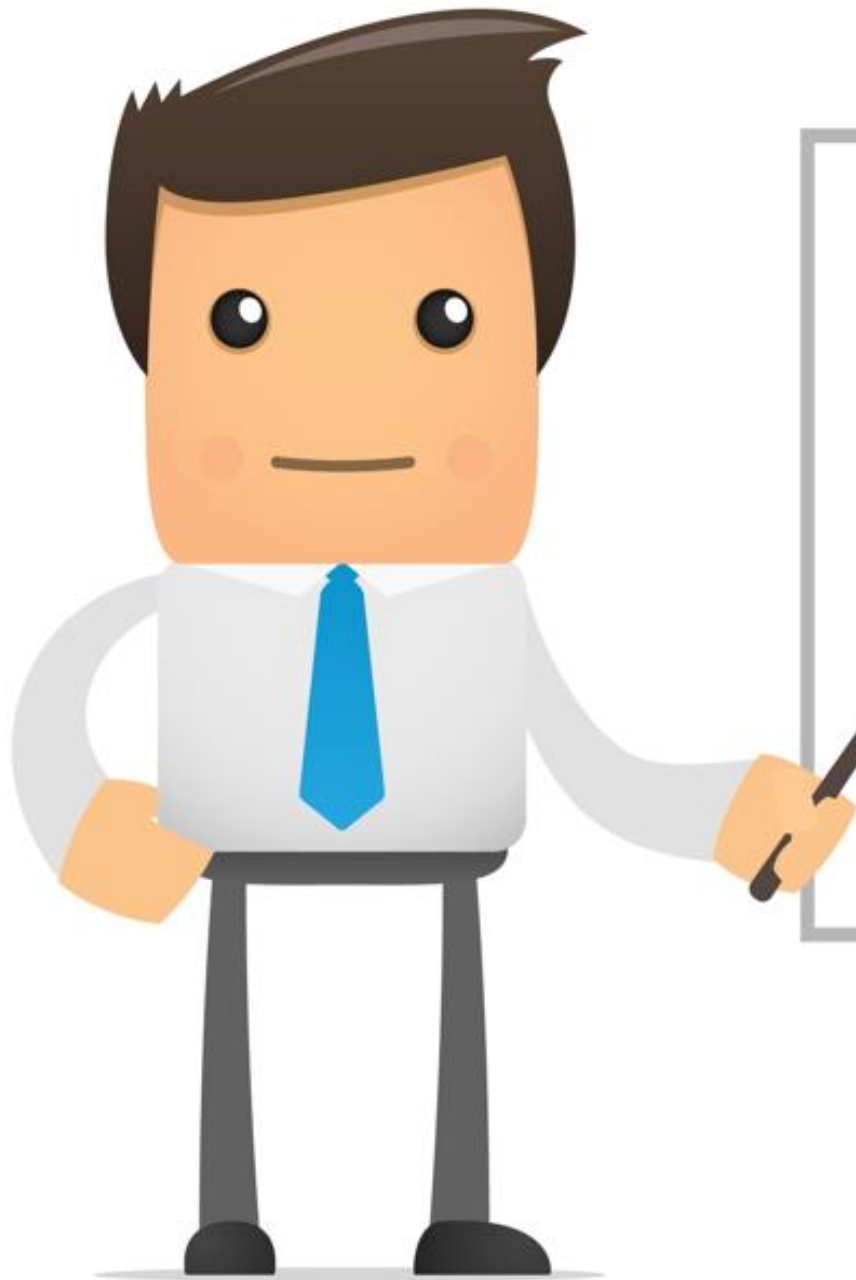
Tipo di corrispondenza: Dominio/URL da paragonare:

☒ Pagine con corrispondenze ☐ Pagine senza corrispondenze

[Link trovati:](#) 177144 / 191080 (92,71%) [Pagine con corrispondenze:](#) 1914 / 1914 (100%) [Pagine senza corrispondenze:](#) 0 / 1914 (0%)







- 1) Link inspection
- 2) Custom filter: content length and depth
- 3) Search Console internal links
- 4) Google Analytics page views
- 5) Look vertical
- 6) Filter

# Internal link audit



Link inter	Visualizzazioni	Tipo lin	Profondi	Content Leng
426	#N/D	#N/D	#N/D	#N/D
394	#N/D	Navigation	2	18282
392	#N/D	Content	2	18282
380	4698	Content	4	18282
377	20927	Navigation	2	62847
376	#N/D	Content	3	18282
376	#N/D	Navigation	2	18282
357	#N/D	Navigation	2	18282
354	3192	Navigation	2	18240
354	#N/D	Navigation	3	159453
350	5228	Content	3	63768
349	#N/D	Content	2	39962
344	#N/D	Content	2	38842
333	4164	Navigation	2	62120
331	#N/D	Navigation	2	18282
330	#N/D	Content	2	18282
325	#N/D	Content	1	74730
321	7821	Navigation	2	59902
321	#N/D	Navigation	2	52992
316	#N/D	Content	4	18282
314	#N/D	Navigation	2	58465
305	3454	Navigation	3	153335
299	#N/D	Navigation	2	18282
295	#N/D	Navigation	2	68709
292	#N/D	Content	3	18282
292	#N/D	Content	2	18282

Visual SEO ispeziona link

Visual SEO filtro person

Ga visualizz pagine

SC link interni



@uale75

# Conclusions & Possible future developments

## SEO

- ✓ Contextual
- ✓ Canonical
- ✓ Signals
- ✓ Anchor

## User:

- ✓ importance of link architecture: "ensure your **visitors** can navigate and enjoy your site»
- ✓ breadcrumb: allows **visitors** to quickly navigate back and previous
- ✓ ... to allow **users** to discover similar content...SC is an important part of the user experience
- ✓ anchor text for internal links can help **users** (and Google) navigate your site better ...



# SEO + user experience



## Google Webmaster Central Blog

Official news on crawling and indexing sites for the Google index

### Evaluating page experience for a better web

Thursday, May 28, 2020

Through both [internal studies](#) and [industry research](#), [users](#) show they prefer sites with a great page experience. In recent years, Search has added a variety of [user experience](#) criteria, such as [how quickly pages load](#) and [mobile-friendliness](#), as factors for ranking results. Earlier this month, the Chrome team announced [Core Web Vitals](#), a set of metrics related to speed, responsiveness and visual stability, to help site owners measure user experience on the web.

Today, we're building on this work and providing an early look at an upcoming Search ranking change that incorporates these page experience metrics. We will introduce a [new signal](#) that combines Core Web Vitals with our existing signals for page experience to provide a holistic picture of the quality of a [user's experience on a web page](#).

**When will this go into effect?** This guide explains [ranking changes that aren't live yet](#). We're providing the tools and documentation now to get you started, but there is no immediate need to take actions now. We will provide a [6 month notice before](#) implementing these changes.





“SEO is an orchestra,  
not an instrument”



Google – internal linking

<https://webmasters.googleblog.com/2008/10/importance-of-link-architecture.html>

<https://support.google.com/webmasters/answer/7451184?hl=en>

<https://support.google.com/webmasters/answer/47334?hl=en>

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# THANKS

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